

OSCAR WILDE
THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY
A DEFENCE OF HIS ETHICS AND ART

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Introduction

*What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose..... his soul?*¹

What is the answer to this question? *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was presented by Oscar Wilde as the most terrible and beautiful reply mankind has ever had. A soulless man can enjoy pleasures of and kind, but he cannot be happy. In short this work, the author's only novel, is a tragedy of a man who has lost love. This novel is widely supposed to be a story of corruption, — also the work itself to be a corrupted book — but as the author himself stated in his *Letters*, "It is a story with a moral a terrible moral."²

Under this theme lies his another advocacy that art itself has nothing to do with morals. He says in his famous preface of this novel: "No

¹ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891; rpt. in Penguin Books, 1975), p. 237. All quotations from the novel will be from this edition. Italics mine. Cf. Matthew xvi. 26 :

For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?

² *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Karl Beckson (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 7.

This is a reply for the attack done by an anonymous reviewer, Samuel Jeyes, of the *St. James Gazette* on 24 June, 1890, within four days of *Dorian Gray's* appearance in the July issue of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*.

artist has ethical sympathies.”¹ In fact it seems rather that the author embodied in this work this attitude toward art which has been censured so bitterly and will be hereafter at issue under certain social situations.

Although the materials used are not really unprecedented, the dexterous Gothic treatment rouses aesthetically bewitching sense of horror, making the reader convince that the author explored deeply into both the conscious and subconscious world of men’s psychology.

In the following pages, I shall try to clarify the two chief interests of Oscar Wilde and how the several phases of Gothic elements are interwoven to culminate the realistic fantasy.

¹ *Dorian Gray*, p. 5.

Chapter I: A Man Without a Soul

In the first place, here is a bird's-eye view of the structure of the novel. For convenience's sake, I divide the twenty chapters into seven groups.

Group 1: Chaps. I-III. (Dorian is 20 years old.)

The encounter of Basil Hallward and Dorian Gray; the beginning of the unavoidable companionship of Dorian Gray and Lord Henry Wotton; Basil's attachment to Dorian and the completion of the picture; and Dorian's fatal wish.

Group 2: Chaps. IV-VIII.

Dorian's falling in love with Sibyl Vane; his engagement with her; his deserting her; and her suicide.

Group 3: Chaps. IX-XI.

Dorian's cold reaction to the death of Sibyl Vane; his concealing of the picture; and his indulgence in pleasures of perfumes, jewels, embroideries, vestments, *etc.* and particularly the evil doings as the result of the bad influences by Lord Henry and the yellow French book.

Group 4: Chaps. XII-XV. (Dorian is 38 years old.)

The murder of Basil Hallward and the obliteration of the dead body by Alan Campbell.

Group 5: Chaps. XVI-XVIII.

Dorian's going to an opium den; and William Vane's two failures in killing Dorian.

Group 6: Chap. XIX.

Another example of his *moral* corruption through the episode of Hetty Merton.

Group 7: Chap. XX.

Dorian's death by means of destroying the portrait.

Considering the groups, one can easily notice that the structure has a curious similarity to Shakespearean five-act plays. We may regard them

as follows :

- 1) Group 1 : The first act where the fatal wish is uttered.
- 2) Group 2 : The second act where Sibyl Vane's love and death take place, and where the first change appears on the picture.
- 3) Groups 3 & 4 : The corrupted life and the evil conduct of the hero leading to the second climax of the painter's murder.
- 4) Group 5 : Another crisis brought about by Sibyl's brother.
- 5) Groups 6 & 7 : The catastrophe of which highlight is the hero's unexpected and strange death.

In fact Dorian's life deserves to be regarded as a tragedy written in prose by an excellent playwright. (Nobody will hesitate to recall this author's several plays including *Salome* and four "comedies of manners".) We see each act, except the first one, has at least a death which is a decisive affair to propel the progress of the play. My aim of this essay, however, not being a comparative study with Shakespeare, I will only mention one typical difference here with Shakespeare's tragedies that no fool playing an important role appears for a cathartic release in this tragedy.

1. The Fatal Wish

In order to convince the reader concerning what I take to be the beginning of the whole drama, let me cite here some passages that depict the central *dramatis personae*.

Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candour of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world.¹

Grace was his, and the white purity of boyhood, and beauty such as old Greek marbles kept for us.²

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. ii, p. 23 ² Ch. ii, p. 44.

Lord Henry's admiration that "this young Adonis, who looks as if he was made out of ivory and rose-leaves. Why, he is a Narcissus"¹ will complete the idea of this twenty-year-old boy of exceptional beauty.

The encounter of the painter and the painted was rather accidental, though inevitable destiny is foreseen. Here is what Basil confesses to Lord Henry. (The reader will please pay special attention to the word "soul".)

I turned halfway round, and saw Dorian Gray for the first time. When our eyes met, I felt that I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I know that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself.²

It (knowing each other) was simply inevitable. We would have spoken to each other without any introduction. I am sure of that. Dorian told me so afterwards. He, too, felt that we were destined to know each other.³

Anticipating that "as long as I live, the personality of Dorian will dominate me",⁴ and in fact "the lad was infinitely dear to him, and his personality had been the great turning-point in his art",⁵ the painter continues :

Dorian, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream. I worshipped you. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you. When you were away from me you were still present in my art.....⁶

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. i, p. 9.

² Ch. i, p. 12.

³ Ch. i, p. 13.

⁴ Ch. i, p. 19.

⁵ Ch. ix, p. 124.

⁶ Ch. ix, p. 128.

Let the undertone that suggests the "beautiful sins"¹ which seems to be "something tragic in a friendship so coloured by romance"² stay aside. But this was the infatuation which corresponds with his "absurd fits of jealousy, his wild devotion, his extravagant panegyrics, his curious reticences"³ that is the motive of the portrait as the painter himself discloses, "I had put too much of myself into it."⁴ Thus his "idolatry"⁵ gave birth to the picture.

Now the scene is being prepared for the appearance of Satan who personifies himself as Lord Henry Wotton. Just as Mephistopheles, disguised himself as a black poodle, tempts Faust into the world of pleasure, so entices this manipulator the naive, pure, gullible, undaunted, "shy, frightened"⁶ youth. Septimus R. Podgers, the cheiromantist who trapped Lord Arthur Savile, is another demonish incarnation of a seducer created by the same author. The reader may also refer to other Faust legends like those written by Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Mann, and such Gothic romances as Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Pater's *Gaston de Latour*, (Mrs.) Ann Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, M. G. Lewis' *Ambrosio or the Monk*. Despite Basil's wrung-out entreatment, "Don't spoil him. Don't try to influence him. Your influences will be bad",⁷ or, "Don't take away from me the one person who gives to my art whatever charm it possesses; my life as an artist depends on him",⁸ Lord Henry "felt intensely interested"⁹ in Dorian, enjoying "the sudden impression that his words had produced"¹⁰ and talks to one who had "rose-red youth and rose-white boyhood."¹¹ "He had merely shot an arrow into the air"¹² was just the words. He flatters his adherent's beauty, admires his youth, so that he is forced to contemplate over his own youth and beauty, and gradually allures him to a new Hedonism, dinging into his ears "what the gods give they quickly take away. You have only a few years in which to live really, perfectly, and fully".¹³ Or, "You will become sallow, and hollow-cheeked,

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. vi, p. 90.

² Ch. ix, p. 131.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Ch. ix, p. 129.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Ch. i, p. 14.

⁷ Ch. i, p. 20.

⁸ Ch. i, pp. 20-21.

⁹ Ch. ii, p. 27.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Ch. ii, p. 26.

¹² *ibid.* Cf. Longfellow: "I shot an arrow into the air."

¹³ Ch. ii, p. 29.

and dull-eyed. You will suffer horribly Ah! realize your youth while you have it. Don't squander the gold of your days, Be always searching for *new sensations*".¹ The phrase italicized (by the present writer) is a most important cue or a key word in this novel, being the motive of the hero's wicked behaviour. "For there is such a little time that your youth will last — such a little time Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!"²

"Extremely dangerous"³ and "dreadfully demoralizing"⁴ Lord Henry trifles with his idea over the boy as there was "something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence."⁵ and as "talking to him was like playing upon an exquisite violin".⁶ He determines

he would try to be to Dorian Gray what, without knowing it, the lad was to the painter who had fashioned the wonderful portrait. He would seek to dominate him — had already, indeed, half done so. He would make that wonderful spirit his own. There was something fascinating in this son of Love and Death.⁷

Dorian whipped up his curiosity and superiority complex: and certainly Dorian Gray was a subject made to his hand, and seemed to promise rich and fruitful results curiosity and desire for new experiences;⁸

The brilliant conversation charms the spell-bound disciple whom the devil desires to dominate. He says abracadabra: "You will always like me, Dorian; Yes, Dorian, you will always be fond of me. I represent to you all the sins you have never had the courage to commit".⁹

The idiosyncratic process of Lord Henry's victory is here described as follows. I will quote several passages according to the psychological change of the affected victim.

The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation.¹⁰

1 *Dorian Gray*, Ch. ii, p. 30. Italics mine.

2 *ibid.* 3 Ch. ii, p. 50. 4 *ibid.*

5 Ch. ii, p. 44. 6 *ibid.* 5 Ch. ii, p. 45.

8 Ch. iv, p. 68. 9 Ch. vi, p. 91. 10 Ch. ii, p. 32.

The life that was to make his soul would mar his body. He would become dreadful, hideous and uncouth.

As he thought of it, a sharp pang of pain struck through him like a knife, and made each delicate fibre of his nature quiver. His eyes deepened into amethyst, and across them came a mist of tears. He felt as if a hand of ice had been laid upon his heart.¹

How sad it is ! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old ! For that — for that — I would give everything ! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give ! *I would give my soul for that !*²

The physical youth and beauty remaining, after the soul was transported into the picture, Dorian enjoys watching the picture narcissistically. The reader will be surprised at finding out the similarity of the psychological description of the passion for the degraded pleasures and curiosity of Dorian in comparison with Hamlet's first soliloquy on his mother, Gertrude.

He grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul.³

The more he knew, the more he desired to know. He had mad hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them.⁴

As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on.⁵

The destructive fatal consequence is surely destined. At last it rolls him down into a hellish pitfall.

I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die. I am jealous

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. ii, p. 33.

² *ibid.*, Italics mine.

³ Ch. xi, p. 143.

⁴ Ch. xi, p. 144.

⁵ *Hamlet*, I, ii, 144-145.

of the portrait you have painted of me. Why should it keep what I must lose?..... Oh, if it were only the other way! *If the picture could change, and I could be always what I am now!*¹

He had uttered a mad wish that he himself might remain young, and the portrait grow old; that his own beauty might be untarnished, and the face on the canvas bear the burden of his passions and his sins; that the painted image might be seared with the lines of suffering and thought, and that he might keep all the delicate bloom and loveliness of his then just conscious boyhood.²

Now the soul of the original of the portrait was sold to Satan as the reader finds the painter indicates the picture "real Dorian" after he identified the picture as thus: "It is part of myself. I feel that".⁴

This theme, that is, in order to satisfy one's desire, one has to diminish one's life, is somewhat analogous with Balzac's *La Pau de Chagrin*. So far as longevity is concerned, in the world of literature any optimistic view seems to be denied, though to be immortal and to keep youth have been an eternal wish, no matter what social state one may occupy. In *Gulliver's Travels* Swift depicts the unhappy Struldbruggs or Immortals in the land of Luggnaggians. Some other stories concerning the secret of rejuvenation would be found in the ancient Greek legend of Endymion, together with such later examples as Hawthorne's *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* and E. G. Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni* and *A Strange Story*.

2. The First Experiment

When Dorian suddenly falls in love with Sibyl Vane, and then abandon her at once, it was the first step of his deterioration, i.e. the extravagant "curiosity and the desire for new experiences".⁵ This reminds us of the case of Faust, whose bargain with Mephisto subjected himself to seduce Margarite, or Gretchen, plunging her into the most pitiful situation.

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. ii, p. 34.

² Ch. vii, p. 103.

³ Ch. ii, p. 37.

⁴ Ch. ii, p. 35.

⁵ Ch. iv, p. 68.

At first Dorian exclaims, "I love her. She is everything to me in life".¹ Or, "Sibyl Vane is sacred!"² Nevertheless, this being pseudo-love is explicit in his dialogue even just after the engagement is announced. The question, "It was curious my not wanting to know her, wasn't it?"³ is denied by the seducer instantly. According to Lord Henry's paradoxical sermon, "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made unlawful".⁴ He ridicules "self-denial".⁵ His creed, which is made of "wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories"⁶ is "a new Hedonism".⁷ Its idea is as follows :

Be always searching for new sensations.⁸

There were poisons so subtle that to know their properties one had to sicken of them.⁹

Pleasure is the only thing worth having a theory about. But I am afraid I cannot claim my theory as my own. It belongs to Nature, not to me. Pleasure is Nature's test, her sign of approval. When we are happy we are always good but when we are good we are not always happy.¹⁰

His votary faithfully puts the creed into practice. It was because he "had a passion for sensations"¹¹ that he met the actress.

Dorian's sudden love, superficial and mad as well as "unreal and selfish",¹² was in substantially "sensuous instinct"¹³ combined with imagination. It was merely "curiosity and the desire for new experiences"¹⁴ like Faust who aims at being omniscient. The demonic jeer that "he would be a wonderful study"¹⁵ is revealed in the pseudo-scientific view

1 *Dorian Gray*, Ch. iv, p. 60.

2 Ch. iv, p. 61.

3 Ch. iv, p. 62.

4 Ch. ii, pp. 25-26.

5 Ch. ii, p. 25.

6 Ch. vi, p. 89.

7 Ch. ii, p. 30.

8 Ch. iv, p. 30.

9 Ch. iv, p. 66.

10 Ch. vi, p. 89.

11 Ch. iv, p. 57.

12 Ch. viii, p. 108.

13 *ibid.*

14 Ch. iv, p. 68.

15 Ch. vi, p. 86.

of "the experimental method was the only method by which one could arrive at any scientific analysis of passions".¹ Lord Henry's Epicurianism is shown in his doctrine that "pleasure is the only thing worth having a theory about".² Later Dorian says, "I have never searched for happiness. Who wants happiness? I have searched for pleasure".³ "One could never pay too high a price for any sensation";⁴ repeats the disguised devil. Yes, any sensation such as marriage. It corresponds to Dorian's words: "I had a passion for sensations".⁵ What is wrong with Lord Henry is that he is not only the serpent in Eden, but also a spectator of his own life, escaping the suffering of life, as he himself acknowledges. He dwells on, "every experience is of value, and, whatever one may say against marriage, it is certainly an experience".⁶ I want the reader to pay special attention to being a spectator of things, since I believe one of the author's basic moral attitude tends to regard it as one of the worst moral attitudes a man can take.

Chapter Seven features the most pathetic scene. Dorian and his two friends "will see the girl to whom I am going to give all my life, to whom I have given everything that is good in me".⁷ Nevertheless, when the curtain rises, her acting proves a complete failure; it is because she has known the reality through love for Prince Charming. For our regret, however serious it may seem, Dorian's love was unjust and cruel as he himself was conscious of it.⁸ Each of his dialogues and his demeanours exposes the cold, arid egotist who drives the unexpected, immature seventeen-year-old girl into plight. From what is written, it will not be incorrect to surmise that the author emphasizes the most Christian ethics of love. I believe the author's fundamental "moral too apparent"⁹ in the theme of a fallen man who has lost his soul and cannot love others. Being soulless means selfish and self-centred, and it equals to being either a cold-hearted apathy and indifferent spectator of life or a positive

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. iv, p. 68. ² Ch. vi, p. 89. ³ Ch. xvii, p. 218.

⁴ Ch. iv, p. 67.

⁵ Ch. iv, p. 57. ⁶ Ch. vi, p. 86.

⁷ Ch. vii, p. 94.

⁸ *Cf.*, Ch. viii, p. 108.

⁹ *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis, (London, 1962), p. 263.
(To the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, 30 June [1890])

rejector of love. Love is the only thing that makes the highest animal a warm-hearted, blessed human being. Therefore to refuse love — both to love and to be loved — necessarily leads one astray to inhumanity. And of course pursuit of pleasure, not happiness, is an exemplary conduct of egoism. The instant she understands that she is merely an implement to satisfy his selfish desire, she commits suicide. He egoistically and pointlessly reproaches her, complaining “You have no idea what I suffered”¹ (because you put me to shame in front of my friends.)

You have killed my love. You used to stir my imagination. Now you don't even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect. I loved you because you were marvellous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realized the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art. You have thrown it all away. You are shallow and stupid. My God! how mad I was to love you! What a fool I have been! You are nothing to me now. I will never see you again. I will never think of you. I will never mention your name. You don't know what you were to me, once. Why..... Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I wish I had never laid eyes upon you! You have spoiled the romance of my life. How little you can know of love, if you say it mars your art! Without your art you are nothing. I would have made you famous, splendid, magnificent. The world have worshipped you, and you would have borne my name. What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face.²

Certainly no girl is ever able to endure such a cruel insult with the last sting of “You have disappointed me”.³ Wilde's central ethics is concentrated here in the fact that being an egoist and being unable to love the girl undoubtedly consist both sides of the shield, since love of self (selfish-love) is absolutely incompatible with love of others. He deserted once-betrothed girl with the mean words of self-defence: “women were better suited to bear sorrow than men”.⁴

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. vii, p. 98.

² Ch. vii, pp. 99-100

³ Ch. vii, p. 101.

⁴ Ch. vii, p. 104.

3. The Portrait as His Conscience

The night Dorian struck a deathblow at Sibyl, at home he finds out that "there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth",¹ "the lines of cruelty round the mouth"² and that "the whole expression had altered".³ He cannot but admit that such an improbable, unearthly wish could be fulfilled in such an unlikely, weird way. He is forced to believe

the vicious cruelty that marred the fine lines of the mouth had, no doubt, appeared at the very moment that the girl had drunk the poison, whatever it was.⁴

He feels that a "sense of infinite pity, not for himself, but for the painted image of himself, came over him".⁵ Hereafter the picture would be to him "*the visible emblem of conscience*"⁶ since "this portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors".⁷

However, the faint remaining of compassion which Dorian fancies as love forced him to write a letter asking forgiveness, knowing nothing about her suicide. Of course it proves futile, for "the devil's bargain"⁸ had already been completed. Again he could see "a look of evil where there had been a look of joy".⁹ Without fail "the portrait had altered".¹⁰ It was "a visible symbol of the degradation of sin an ever-present sign of the ruin men brought upon their souls".¹¹ Here we notice a second, too apparent, moral intended by the author told by Walter Pater: "Vice and crime make people coarse and ugly".¹² Dorian's degeneration with its coincident deterioration of the portrait threatens us with hellish ugliness.

1 *Dorian Gray*, Ch. vii, p. 103.

2 *ibid.*

3 *ibid.*

4 Ch. viii, p. 118.

5 Ch. vii, p. 104.

6 Ch. vii, p. 105. Italics mine.

7 Ch. viii, p. 120.

8 Ch. xvi, p. 213. "They say he has sold himself to the devil for a pretty face."

9 Ch. viii, p. 107.

10 Ch. viii, p. 108.

11 Ch. viii, p. 109.

12 *Heritage*, p. 85. He becomes the spoiler of the fair young man, whose bodily form remains un-aged, while his picture, the *chef-d'oeuvre* of the artist Hallward, changes miraculously with the gradual corruption of his soul.

The portrait

had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself — something that would breed horrors and yet would never die. What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas. They would mar its beauty, and eat away its grace. They would defile it, and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would be always alive.¹

This corresponds to the shifting of his responsibility to poor Basil after murdering the friend :

Nor, indeed, was it the death of Basil Hallward that weighed most upon his mind. It was the living death of his own soul that troubled him. Basil had painted the portrait that had marred his life.²

He is now in despair. "If the picture was to alter, it was to alter. That was all".³ Inclining to a kind of determinism, he murmurs in his mind :

Yes, life has decided that for him — life, and his own infinite curiosity about life. Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joy and wilder sins — he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame: that was all.⁴

You will notice the ringing of faint resignation mixed with ironical perversity from the repeated "that was all".

We here see the double image of Faust. Though Faust bears the burden all by himself, in this novel, the portrait is to bear all the burdens of old age and sins. It is important to confirm that this also means that he has neither conscience, nor humanly soul in him. Because he lost his heart, soul, conscience, he cannot feel the pain he should have suffered from. Instead of conscience, unconscious egoism, as Lord Henry terms

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. x, p. 133.

² Ch. xx, p. 245.

³ Ch. viii, p. 120.

⁴ Ch. viii, p. 119.

it, wields its power over him. The next question is how he feels and behaves toward Sibyl.

Consequently for the former he is quite irresponsible, saying as follows :

Harry, what shall I do? You don't know the danger I am in, and there is nothing to keep me straight. She would have done that for me. She had no right to kill herself. It was selfish of her.¹

It is not my fault that this terrible tragedy has prevented my doing what was right.²

Harry, why is it that I cannot feel this tragedy as much as I want to? I don't think I am heartless, do you?³

And yet I must admit that this thing that has happened does not affect me as it should. It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy, a tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded.⁴

Lord Henry's demoniac opinion, which is now Dorian's canon, goes :

Sometimes, however, a tragedy that possesses artistic elements of beauty crosses our lives. If these elements of beauty are real, the whole thing simply appeals to our sense of dramatic effect. Suddenly *we find that we are no longer actors, but the spectators of the play*. Or rather we are both. We watch ourselves, and the mere wonder of the spectacle enthral us. In the present case, what is it that has really happened? Someone has killed herself for love of you. I wish that I had ever had such an experience.⁵

According to Lord Henry, even love is trifled with: "They [wonders] make one believe in the reality of the things we all play with, such as

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. viii, p. 113.

² *ibid.*,

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Ch. viii, p. 114.

⁵ *ibid.*, Italics mine.

romance, passion, and love".¹ By him the reader will also be persuaded to regard Sibyl Vane's death "as a strange lurid fragment"² from some Jacobean tragedy and no need to deplore for her as "the girl never really lived, and so she has never really died".³ He preaches that her existence was limited to her life on the stage, not in the actual life, and that this is why she passed away. She was "a wonderful tragic figure sent in the world stage to show the supreme reality of love".⁴ Gradually Lord Henry corners his prey in a *cul-de-sac*. He blows into his mind that "every experience is of value, and, whatever one may say against marriage, it is certainly an experience".⁵

Dorian, being poisoned, brags with arrogant indifference which provokes the present writer most in the book as follows.

It has been a marvellous experience. That is all. I wonder if life has still in store for me anything as marvellous.⁶

It was simply AN EXPERIENCE! What a diabolical curse! His only concern is his safety. He will keep youth. Otherwise, "What did it matter what happened to the coloured image on the canvas? He would be safe. That was everything".⁷ "What's done is done. What is past is past."⁸ The above dialogue reverberates in our ears like a synonymous lament of Lady Macbeth.¹⁰ After that he spends such a debaucherous life as the following :

in his search for sensatitons that would be at once once new and delightful, and possess that element of strangeness that is so essential to romance, he would often adopt certain modes of thought that he knew to be really alien to his nature, abandon himself to their subtle influences, and then having, as it were, caught their colour and satisfied his in-

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. viii, p. 116.

² Ch. viii, p. 117.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Ch. viii, p. 119.

⁵ Ch. vi, p. 86.

⁶ Ch. viii, p. 117.

⁷ Ch. viii, p. 120.

⁹ Ch. ix, p. 122.

¹⁰ Cf. Shakespeare: *Macbeth*, V, ii, 75. "What's done cannot be undone." Also pay attention to Manfred's bragging.

Byron: *Manfred*, III, ii, 9. "What I have done is done."

tellectual curiosity, leave them with that curious indifference that is not incompatible with a real ardour of temperament, and that indeed, according to certain psychologists, is often a condition of it.¹

In *St. James Gazette* the author wrote :

And the moral is this : all excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment. The painter, Basil Hallward, worshipping physical beauty far too much, as most painters do, dies by the hand of one in whose soul he has created a monstrous and absurd vanity. Dorian Gray, having led a life of mere sensation and pleasure, tries to kill conscience, and at that moment kills himself. Lord Henry Wotton seeks to be merely the spectator of life. He finds that those who reject the battle are more deeply wounded than those who take part in it.²

As for what the moral is, your critic states that it is this — that when a man feels himself becoming “too angelic” he should rush out and make a “beast of himself !” I cannot say that I consider this a moral. The real moral of the story is that all excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its punishment, and this moral is so far artistically and deliberately suppressed that it does not enunciate its law as a general principle, but realises itself purely in the lives of individuals, and so becomes simply a dramatic element in a work of art, and not the object of the work of art itself.³

In this statement, the reader will surely find the lesson of “moderation” or, I had better say, “the golden mean” or “the happy mean”. The three main characters are all punished owing to the excess of each feature. Basil Hallward endorses it in the novel.

Your rank and wealth, Harry ; my brain, such as they are — my art,

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. xi, p. 147.

² Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Isobel Murray, (London, Oxford University Press, 1974), p. viii.

³ *Letters*, p. 263.

whatever it may be worth ; Dorian Gray's good looks — we shall suffer for what the gods have given us, suffer terribly.¹

4. The Conclusion of the Story

After the Sibyl affair, when he was twenty, through "Lord Henry's influence, and still more poisonous influences that came from his own temperament"² and the French book lent by Lord Henry, for eighteen years, he has rendered himself to sinful life such as driving Adrian Singleton to opium dens, ending by his murder of Basil Hallward at the age of thirty-eight. He crossed out the painter ; Alan Campbell who erased Basil committed suicide ; and at last it seemed he was safe. He spared Hetty Merton, an innocent village girl, from ruin. It was not from goodness which his egotism desired to be, but from his vanity, curiosity and desire for a new sensation, and hypocrisy. (*Cf.*, *Dorian Gray*, p. 246.) He saw a cunning look, newly spilt blood on the feet and on the hand of the portrait. Now he blames the portrait which bears "his beauty that had ruined him, his beauty and the youth that he had prayed for".³ The picture that once gave him pleasure now gives pain as he understands it is the materialized conscience. Besides, out of his egotism he reproaches the picture for tormenting him unjustly.

For it was an unjust mirror, this mirror of his soul that he was looking at.⁴

The picture alone is now the evidence of his crimes which deprives him of his peace. He wants to destroy the picture to be freed both from conscience and from the mundane censure. He asserts as follows :

It would kill the past, and when that was dead he would be free.

It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and, without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace.⁵

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. i, pp. 9-10.

² Ch. x, p. 133.

³ Ch. xx, p. 244.

⁴ Ch. xx, p. 246.

⁵ Ch. xx, p. 247.

Poe's William Wilson kills his Doppelgänger for the same reason. Here a sort of similar situation of Dorian's being brought at bay is well depicted. William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* delineates the psychology of a hunted man, too.

In Chapter Two, when the censured painter dares to rip up the canvas with a palette-knife, having been criticized by Dorian to have had more affection toward the painted portrait than toward the living sitter, Dorian cries. "Don't Basil, don't! It would be murder!"¹ No doubt the reader will remind the exquisite correspondence of the catastrophe of Dorian's stabbing himself with this scene. The instant he stabbed the picture, he kills himself. It may be unnecessary to explain that either conscience or spirit is inseparable from physical existence, and in this separation of the soul and the body the horror and the problems of this novel exist.

In this novel, although the subject matters are sometimes found standing in a trio,² the reader will notice many important dualisms in addition to the above mentioned severance of both sides of man's existence. Apart from the dualism of Dorian and the picture, we find "shape and image", "conscience and wicked acts", "reality and art", "the value of the real society and the value of art", and so on.

The Doppelgänger theme is found, for instances, in Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Poe's *William Wilson* (1839), *Metzengerstein* (1832), and *The Oval Portrait* (1842), Hawthorne's *The Minister's Black Veil* (1836), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* (1859), etc. All of them deal with the horror of the soul — a very Gothic theme and yet very Christian. Among them the horror's Doppelgänger in *William Wilson* is extremely similar to the portrait in *Dorian Gray* in the respect that both of them represent conscience itself. As the horror of *William Wilson* comes from its being spiritual, of conscience, strictly of the soul, so Wilde's horror originates from being strictly con-

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. ii, p. 35.

² Yuichi Maekawa, 'On "The Time Scheme" in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*', included in *The Novels and the Societies*, ed. by Læko Kondo, (Tokyo, Kenkyusha, 1972; in Japanese).

scientific. In the next section, I will dwell a little on this theme.

5. Soul as Conscience

The kernel moral idea of the author seems to be focussed in the following sentences in his letter to the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle* on 30 June, 1890 :

it is a story with a moral a terrible moral. the real trouble I experienced in writing the story was that of keeping the extremely obvious moral subordinate to the artistic and dramatic effect I think the moral too apparent.¹

Just before his dreadful death, Dorian asserts: "It [the picture] had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been conscience".² Dorian's conscience has existed in the picture, not in his body.

What he here emphasizes as "a terrible moral" may be considered as a resonance of what in "The Fisherman and His Soul", a fairy story included in *A House of Pomegranates* published in 1891, the next year of the publication of the novel we are discussing now.

A young fisherman wants to send his soul away in order to marry a mermaid who has no "human soul", because, unless he casts away his soul, she cannot love him. The priest remonstrates against such a blasphemous behaviour as "the soul is the noblest part of man"³ and that there is "nothing more precious than a human soul".⁴ Even a witch grows pale and shudders when she was asked to send his soul away. She says, "that is a terrible thing to do",⁵ for "what men call the shadow of the body is not the shadow of the body, but is the body of the soul".⁶ When at last the fisherman was going to cut the shadow away from him, his soul

¹ *Letters*, p. 263.

² *Dorian Gray*, Ch. xx, p. 247.

³ Wilde, *The Happy Prince and Other Stories*, "The Fisherman and His Soul", (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., Puffin Books, 1975), p. 151. All quotations from the story will be from this edition.

⁴ *ibid.* ⁵ *ibid.*, p. 154. ⁶ *ibid.*, p. 160.

implores to its owner :

If indeed thou must drive me from thee, send me not forth without a heart. The world is cruel, give me thy heart to take with me.¹

Yet he refuses the Soul's entreatment, so the soul leaves him without a heart. After that, once every year they meet and the Soul, now a wicked one, tempts him with Wisdom first, Riches for the second time in vain. For the third time the fisherman being tempted by the allusion of girls' feet which no mermaid has, the evil Soul without a heart enters into him so as to induce him to every earthly pleasure, wicked acts and sins. I must reiterate the central idea of Oscar Wilde's morality: If one lose a human soul, one is not a compassionate, merciful human being any more. Lacking conscience, one is no more an innocent being who loves and sympathizes. He is merely a damned mortal for whom no salvation may ever be expected. Both *The Fisherman and His Soul* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are books of damnation. In both cases, conscience does not act; being superior, the frameworks without conscience do evil things. The conscience of the fisherman exists in the heart, so the Soul which is embodied as a shadow has no conscience at all. The reader will also recall Andersen's "The Shadow" whose malicious evils destroy the scholar, the former owner of the Shadow.

I shall compare the conclusions of the two stories a little further now. In the former, the Soul prays the fisherman to let it enter his heart, and the instant the fisherman agrees and offers help, the mermaid dies. It means that a man with a soul combined with a heart is incompatible with being a husband of a soulless pagan creature. The fisherman becomes so sad that his heart is broken; the Soul has found entrance; and therefore the Soul and the heart are bound together as before. Against our logical expectation, the fisherman dies, holding the cold mermaid in his arms. In the latter, the first devilish attack is to let the laboratory animal — for he has no humanly soul now — have the desire to pursue

¹ "The Fisherman and His Soul", p. 161.

sensations — or, I dare say, pleasure — in order to trap him “in the dark underworld from which he cannot escape”. This is endorsed by Basil’s words: “You talk as if you had no heart, no pity in you. It is Harry’s influence”.¹

According to Lord Henry, one had better be a spectator of the *mise-en-scène* of life, so, as I have quoted, love is a thing to be played with, and the death of his former lover is grasped merely as an experience.

Years elapse. Dorian hates Basil, his previous adorer, and kills him.² And now his youth and beauty which were his pride are hateful to him. The portrait which is the incarnation of conscience is a burden for the frame without the soul. He wants to ruin the picture and stabs it, intending to destroy the soul-conscience. Its result, the death of the soul, is righteously his whole death. At the time of the physical and spiritual death, the union is completed, just like the case of the fisherman.

The author himself accounts for the conclusion of the story as follows in his letter mentioned before.

Your critic also falls into error when he says that Dorian Gray, having a “cool, calculating, conscienceless character,” was inconsistent when he destroyed the picture of his own soul, on the ground that the picture did not become less hideous after he had done what, in his vanity, he had considered his first good action. Dorian Gray has not got a cool, calculating, conscienceless character at all. On the contrary, he is extremely impulsive, absurdly romantic, and is haunted all through his life by an exaggerated sense of conscience which mars his pleasures for him

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. ix, p. 122.

² The underplot of Basil Hallward’s death is laid three times before his murder takes place. First in the beginning of the First Chapter (p. 12); with an episode of his past disappearance on p. 7. Secondly on p. 122 and thirdly on p. 131, both in the Ninth Chapter.

Fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrow. (Ch. i, p. 12)

‘Well, I am punished for that, Dorian...or shall be some day.’ (Ch. ix, p. 122)

There seemed to him to be something tragic in a friendship so coloured by romance. (Ch. ix, p. 131)

and warns him that youth and enjoyment are not everything in the world. It is finally to get rid of the conscience that had dogged his steps from year to year that he destroys the picture; and thus in his attempt to kill conscience Dorian Gray kills himself.¹

¹ *Letters*, pp. 263—264

II. The Dissension of Art and Moral

The Preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which was published separately in 1891 (with Basil Hallward's comment in 1904), was the collection of aphorisms to retaliate on the innumerable attacks on the novel published in the previous year. It contains Wilde's convictions on art and artists which was embodied in the novel. Here are the several main items he treats with.

1. On artists.

2. On art.

Art is indifferent from ethics.

Realism, as well as Romanticism, is not art.

Life imitates art.

Art is useless.

In this chapter, I shall deal with his aesthetic view which offended the conventional Victorian people.

Prior to our discussion of the preface, I would like to begin with some important aspects of the artistic spirit of the time. We may pursue the following aesthetic line in English literature.

Romantic aestheticism	Moral aestheticism	Aestheticism	Decadence
Keats	{ Bossetti (PRB) Ruskin	Pater	Wilde

The characters depicted by Rossetti are pure, though stained with evil. Just as Rossetti delineated Elizabeth Siddal or Jane Morris as sensuous manifestation of total spiritual purity, Basil Hallward depicted Dorian Gray as the sensuous manifestation of his largely pure but tainted soul so as to become the perfect manifestation of his own soul.

Arthur Symons, a disciple and biographer of Pater, did not distinguish the decadent movement from the symbolic movement, and denominates decadence in his *The Decadent Movement in Literature* as an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over-subtilising re-

finement, a spiritual and moral perversity which derives pleasure from this evil, as it is a beautiful and interesting disease.

The English decadent movement was under the intense influence of Pater's *The Renaissance* (1873) and Joris-Karl Huysmans's *À Rebours* (1884). Here Hawthorne's *The Prophetic Picture, Edward Randolph, The Marble Faun* (1860), and Disraeli's *Vivian Gray* (1826-7) may have to be referred to. The decadence has also a lack of energy to live, and therefore it brews a certain negative view of life, another feature of the aspiration for *nil*, a sort of Schopenhauer-like pessimism. This phase holds a direct and plain emission in Axël's words written by Philippe Auguste de Villier de L'Isle-Adam (1838-89).¹

Nassar's definition of a decadent is as follows, and I think this quotation applies to the decadent Dorian Gray quite well.

a decadent looking within and discovering not only purity but evil and corruption, yields to the corrupt impulse and tries to find joy and beauty in evil. Finally, the vision of evil becomes unbearable, the decadent has burned all his bridges, and he finds himself trapped in a dark underworld from which he cannot escape.²

Oscar Wilde, the direct Oxford student of Pater, not only succeeds the decadent idea from whom he adores, embodying it into *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but also develops it into Demonism in *Salome* which is a book of entire evil devoted to the worship of evil beauty in a Satanic region. Verlaine's *Silhouettes* (1892) as well as poems of Baudelaire (1821-67) and Rimbaud (1854-91) has *ennui* and spleen in common.³

As a dandy, Dorian Gray and his creator roots from one stem of dandyism, which is "an attempt to assert the absolute modernity of beauty".⁴

1 Appendix A.

2 Christopher S. Nassar, *Into the Demon Universe*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1974), p. 37.

3 Cf. Masao Hirashima, Akimasa Kanno & Shuji Takashina, *Literature and Art in the Nineteenth Century*, (Tokyo, Seido-sha, 1972), XI. (In Japanese)

4 *Dorian Gray*, Ch. xi, p. 144.

L'art pour l'art which is of French origin has its *raison d'être* as an opposing conception of "art for life's sake". This artistic movement went so far as (1) dandyism of Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98), Paul Marie Verlaine (1844-96), *etc.* who seemed to have been dipped in *ennui* or spleen, or who revolted against the ill equalized vulgar society to appear as Wilde's Dorian Gray and Huysmans's Des Esseintes in *À Rebours*, (2) decadent movement which includes the disillusionment of living connected with pessimism and a renovating antinomianism seen in *Dorian Gray* in some sense; (3) demonism whose strong denial of the conventional moral is not only the artistic, but also a social matter.

The *esprit* of *fin de siècle* having too many problems for me to discuss here, let me add only a few phenomena worthy to be paid attention to. They are in the field of science such as Darwinism or the works of Jules Verne (1828-1905) which inevitably resulted in the downfall of Christianity or religion in general and socialism as seen in the establishment of Fabian Society.

1. On Artists

For convenience' sake, here I have extracted his conception of artists from the Preface.

The artist is the creator of beautiful things.

To reveal art and conceal artist is art's aim.

.....

They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only beauty.¹

The former two sentences correspond with the following ones in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

An artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them.²

¹ *Dorian Gray*, (Preface), p. 5. ² Ch. i, p. 18.

I am afraid that I have shown in it [portrait] the secret of my own soul.¹

Basil puts everything that is charming in him into his work.
Good artists exist simply in what they make.....²

The second extract from page 11 of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* finds a duplicate expression in *The Decay of Lying*, a representative essay on art.

The only portraits in which one believes are portraits where there is very little of the sitter and a very great deal of the artist.³

justification of a character in a novel is not that other persons are what they are, but that the author is what he is. Otherwise the novel is not a work of art.⁴

2. Art is Irrelevant to Ethics

The preface :

There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.⁵

The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium. No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved.⁶

The novel :

Art has no influence upon action. It annihilates the desire to act. It

1 *Dorian Gray*, Ch. i, p. 11.

2 Ch. iv, p. 65.

3 Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*, with comments and translation by Masatoshi Yoshida, (Tokyo, Kenkyusha, 1976), p. 70.

4 *Decay*, pp. 18-20. 5 *Dorian Gray*, p. 5. 6 *ibid.*

is superbly sterile. The books the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame. That is all.¹

The Decay of Lying :

- (1) Art begins with abstract decoration, with purely imaginative and pleasurable work dealing with what is unreal and non-existent.
- (2) Art takes life as part of her material, recreate it and keeps between herself and reality the impenetrable barrier
- (3) Life gets the upper hand, and drives Art out into the wilderness. This is the true decadence,.....²

The proper school to learn art in is not life but Art.³

Art never expresses anything but itself. It has an independent life, just as Thought has, and develops purely on its own lines.⁴

Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue thing, is the proper aim of Art.⁵

3. Life Immitates Art

The Preface :

It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.⁶

The novel :

To him life itself was the first, the greatest, of the arts.⁷

No theory of life seemed to him to be of any importance compared with life itself.⁸

I am so glad Life has been your art. You have set yourself to music.

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. xix, p. 241. ² *Decay*, p. 30. ³ *ibid.* p. 36.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 78. ⁵ *ibid.* ⁶ *Dorian Gray*, p. 6.

⁷ Ch. xi, p. 144. ⁸ Ch. xi, p. 148.

Your days are your sonnets.¹

The Decay of Lying :

This unfortunate aphorism about Art holding the mirror up to nature.²

Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life.³

Life is Art's best, Art's only pupil⁴

All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals.⁵

External Nature also imitates Art.⁶

Nature, no less than Life, is an imitation of Art.

.....

She (Nature) is our creation.⁷

4. All Art Is Useless

The Preface :

We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.

All art is quite useless.⁸

The Decay of Lying :

Art never expresses anything but itself. It has an independent life just

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. xix, p. 240.

² *Decay*, p. 44.

³ *ibid.* p. 46, p. 56, p. 80.

⁴ *ibid.* p. 48.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 78.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 58.

⁸ *Dorian Gray*, p. 6.

aa Thought has, and develops purely on its own lines.¹

5. Realism

The Preface :

The nineteenth-century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass.²

The Novel :

I hate vulgar realism in literature.³

The Decay of Lying :

There is no bridge between reality and art, but Realism ignores this truth.⁴

6. Beauty, Senses & Pleasure

We have come to the stage to see what kind of aesthetic view Wilde had. I will select some passages from the novel, and see how they are related with his conceptions of senses and pleasure.

On Beauty :

Genius lasts longer than beauty.⁵

Beauty is a form of Genius — is higher, indeed, than Genius.⁶

Beauty is the wonder of wonders.⁷

The search for beauty being the real secret of life.⁸

There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through

¹ *Decay*, p. 78. Cf. Kant: *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (1790)

“eine Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck” 「美は目的なき合目的性」

壯子「雜編外物第26」 「無用の用」

芭蕉「柴門辭」 「予が風雅は夏炉冬扇のごとし。衆にさからひて用うところなし。」

² *Dorian Gray*, p. 5. ³ *ibid.*, p. 215. ⁴ Cf. *Decay*, pp. 32-36.

⁵ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. i, p. 18. ⁶ Ch. ii, p. 29.

⁷ *ibid.* ⁸ Ch. iv, p. 57.

which he could realize his conception of the beautiful¹
I think it is better to be beautiful than to be good²

On Senses and Sensations :

He sought to elaborate some new scheme of life that would have its reasoned philosophy and its ordered principles, and find in the spiritualizing of the senses its highest realization.³

The worship of the senses has often, and with much justice, been decried, men feeling a natural instinct of terror about passions and sensations that seem stronger than themselves.....⁴

a new spirituality, of which a fine instinct for beauty was to be the dominant characteristic.⁵

To cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul.⁶

On Pleasure :

Pleasure is Nature's test, her sign of approval.⁷

There had been mad wilful rejections (of pleasure), monstrous forms of self-torture and self-denial, whose origin was fear, and whose result was a degradation infinitely more terrible than that fancied degradation from which, in their ignorance, they had sought to escape.⁸

A new Hedonism that was to re-create life, and to save it from that harsh, uncomely puritanism that is having, in our own day, its curious revival. Its aim, indeed, was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be. Of the asceticism that deadens the senses, as of the vulgar profligacy that dulls them, it was to know nothing. But it was to teach man to concentrate himself

¹ Ch. xi, p. 163.

² Ch. xvii, p. 215.

³ Ch. xi, p. 145. Cf. Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Ch. xvi, p. 204.

⁷ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. vi, p. 89.

⁸ Ch. xi, p. 145.

upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment.¹

The new Hedonism has some effect to *aufheben*. What Hedonism or Epicurianism means shall be examined roughly.

In Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, Epicureanism is neither the asceticism of Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180) nor the profligacy that dull the senses. It is to "concentrate himself upon the moment of life".² Its Japanese adaptation is found in *Uzumaki (The Whirlpool)* by Bin Ueda.³

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. xi, p. 146.

² *ibid.*

³ Cf. Appendix B.

Conclusion

In The Preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Oscar Wilde says: "No artist has ethical sympathies".¹ This novel is a strict experiment of this theory. Just as E. A. Poe insists in *The Poetic Principle* (1850) that the aim of poetry is not to teach didactically but to aspire after celestial beauty, Wilde claims in "The Decay of Lying" in *Intentions* (1891) that art expresses nothing but art. Thus his only novel is a concrete embodiment of his advocacy. He devised to rouse sensations of terror and beauty simultaneously. For this purpose he adopts the *maniérisme* of Gothic romances.

The mysterious Gothic elements are scattered elsewhere in the novel. A murder in a secret room behind closed doors may be a sort of a *table d'hôte* in any Gothic romances. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Poe's *Metzengerstein* have a duplicate image in a form of a picture, the portrait bleeding in the former case, and a horse running out of a picture in the latter. Wilde's strong concern with "Gothic art the art of those whose minds have been troubled with reverie"² enamoured him so as to construct a world of reverie in a story so real for us that the undividable world of reality and reverie, or the inconvincible convertibility between the two unreversible worlds, threatens to impair our dignity of existence. Opium eating which had been prevailing lets one forget the actual sufferings and crimes one has committed, at the same time leading one to the realm of fantasy, which De Quincey and Berlioz's *Symphony* (1830) share with. There are still more terrors and horrors stirred up by the five organs.

However, the most dreadful horror is not given from outside, from the settings mentioned above. It generates within and grows of its own accord. It is termed psychological, subconscious or unconscious horror. In other words it is bred within the hero's soul. It is his own horror

¹ *Dorian Gray*, (Preface), p. 5. ² Ch. xi, p. 146.

for things demonish lurking within his own soul. It takes the shapes of dreams, fancies, fantasies, visions, reveries, and illusions affected by imagination.

First, it is the censure by conscience as we have seen in detail, comparing with *The Fisherman and His soul*. We have already seen that Poe's *William Wilson* presents another good example. Secondly, it may be a self-consciousness of the original sin of which instance is found, say, in Hawthorne's *The Minister's Black Veil*, although this is not obviously stated in this novel. Thirdly, it is caused from something characteristic. Just as in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* the horror germinates in the *alter ego*, so in *Dorian Gray* the horror can be traced back to, so to speak, profanity or blasphemy; that is, Dorian's loss of awe for God. Outrageous arrogance due to exceptional curiosity makes him try to keep both youth and beauty against the divine providence. It is certainly too haughty of him to try to alter His law. The results are his indulgence in physical pleasures of women and opium, *etc.*, the greedy bottomless desire for the ecstasy of new experiences to gain further more stimuli, though retaliated by no satisfaction at all. Omnipotent and omniscient almighty God will punish him. Naturally the settlement of the story must be the most reasonable one, the poetic justice. For the fourth time, Dorian's too self-centredness to care for others, namely, his egoism and egotism. He never loves others, and this lack of sympathy for others brings out nothing but unhappiness. No salvation by Goethe's Helen or by Dante's Beatrice can be expected so far.

Summing up, the fact that there is no salvation in the end and that there is not any comic relief throughout affects the whole atmosphere of the novel which is indeed too dark and choking.

Since the materials of this novel are rather immoral, the common reader has been apt to take it for a book of amoral, though enchanting, horror.

Nevertheless, the author's true intention, however, seems to be revealed in Dorian's sad dirge :

Like the painting of a sorrow,

A face without a heart.¹

This work being an elegy for a soulless man who is outside of love, to say nothing of what I have quoted in the very beginning, the essence is evidently the Christian moral of love taught in the New Testament.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.²

Actually this novel harbours the quintessence of a most ethical view of Oscar Wilde combined with his aesthetic ideas in the centre wrapped with the coating of feigned ghastly immorality, seasoned with outstanding unique aphorisms and epigrams, and spiced with mystifying paradoxes.

¹ *Dorian Gray*, Ch. xx, p. 237.

Cf. Hamlet, IV, vii, 108-109.

Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart.

² I Corinthians, xiii, 1.

APPENDIX

A 「生きることなんか 召使どもが代りにやってくれるさ。」

B 「新ヘドニズム」は、ただ単に「飲めよ歌えよ」といった世俗的亭楽主義・快楽主義でなく、それに涙ぐましいばかりの禁欲もしくは節制の裏打をしたもの、ということになる。

人はただ快楽を追うことにばかり汲々(きゅうきゅう)としていると、かえって快楽そのものを逃がしてしまう。——「歓楽極まって哀情ようやく深し」とは、節度を知らない肉体的・官能的快楽が、飽満・倦怠におち入り易いことをいったのであろう。

ペイターがここで縷々(るる)説いていることを、明治の昔、ペイターを最初に日本に紹介したひとり上田敏は、その一生一作の小説「うづまき」の中で、主人公牧 春雄青年の考えとしてダイジェストしている。——

生を楽もう、生活を豊富にしようというのが春雄の絶えず熱望する所である。時と処との堅く取囲んだ牢獄を脱して、思想、感情、感覚を飽くまでも多く味いたい。

人間は永遠の一瞬間である。しかもその瞬間の裡(うち)に不変不死の何ものかが在って、個人はただほんの暫くの間、その収益権を賦与されたに過ぎないと考えた。

人間の命は焰(えん)のようだ。刹那々に繰返される種々の勢力の会合によって、辛(か)らく灯火は消えずにいるが、これらの勢力もいずれは早晚離散する。

人間の心は渦巻(うずまき)のようだ。経験が刻み付ける印象のために、感覚と感情と思想の波は、眩(めくら)むばかりの回転をしている。この世に真の現実といえるものは、ただ一瞬間、一刹那の鋭い知覚であるが、はっと思う間に、その知覚は消えて、過去の闇に没(め)してしまう。

人間の意味ある生活は、この消え易い刻々の知覚を十分に翫(あそ)みし利用するにある。勢力の最大多数が最も純粋に働いているその焦点を逃さないにある。

また

春雄はここで自己の養成という大事業に思付いた。神経を敏にし、感覚を鋭くし、始終精神を爽やかにして、森羅万象の万花鏡（からくり）を、残る隈なく見破りたい、要するに有為（うい）の世の楽を、あらん限り多く享けたいというのである。

この享楽主義（ちれったんちずむ）というのは、散漫微温の興味をもって、事物の表面を掠（かす）って行こうというのでは無い、道楽に、移氣に、真と美とに戯（たわ）むれて、ついぞ本気にならない以而非（えせ）風流を指すのでは無い。真の享楽家には、もっと深い苦心が要（い）る。まず第一に、万事を尽（ことごと）く理解しようとする熱望と、宛転（えんてん）自在の同情心とが必要で、その上更に一種の用心深い処が無ければならない。すなわちこの何事も不確な世に処しては、もしも飛んだ瞞著（ごまかし）に遇うかも知れないからこれにあらかじめ備える控目の思想である。こういう思想上の態度は、実行上の工合によって、下らない事にもなり、また極めて面白いものにもなる。

要するに享楽主義とは、懷疑を楽みの道具に変える術である。

（河口真一編著 ウォルター・ペイター作「ザ・ヤングメリアス」

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